DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 939 CS 503 142

AUTHOR Ehrlich, Larry G.
TITLE The Pathogenic Secret: A Response to Discrimination.
PUB DATE Nov 80
NOTE 19p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (66th, New York, NY, November 13-16, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adults: Attitudes: Family Attitudes: *Homosexuality: *Majority Attitudes: Mental Health: *Psychopathology: Self Actualization: Social Attitudes: *Social Discrimination

ABSTRACT

The struggle for a positive self-image in the gay community has been keynoted by confrontations between gays and the censuring public, and by their own introspection. Since the risks demanded by self disclosure are greater for gays than for heterosexuals, a nonsupportive environment may force a strategy of nondisclosure on gays. This often develops into a "pathogenic secret"--information intentionally withheld that induces a state of physical and psychological dysfunction. The factor most responsible for reinforcing the pathogenic secret in gays is the manifestation of "homophobia," extreme fear or hatred of gays. Public violence and law enforcement acts against gays as well as more subtle discrimination, by rumor or in the job market, point out the extent of homophobia. The institutions to which gays might turn to temper discrimination are the bastions of this homophobia: church, family, peers, and education institutions. Ironically, antigay attitudes spring from the irrational fear of assault on male privilege, a symptom of the repressive norms and traditional family mold that heterosexual society has placed upon itself. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED194939

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

THE PATHOGENIC SECRET: A RESPONSE TO DISCRIMINATION

Larry G. Ehrlich
Department of Communication Studies
University of Missouri at Kansas City

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Larry G. Ehrlich

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Speech Communication Association
November 15, 1980

The Sheraton Center
New York City

CS503142

For a gay man or woman who feels like the only person in the world, the knowledge that millions of individuals share a similar life style can be surprisingly unsupportive. Even the discovery of "others" across town or a member of the "fraternity or sorority" right next door can be an unsatisfying edge against the feelings of isolation and disaffection that result from negative labels superimposed by the most insensitive quarters in one's environment. And, even homosexual men and women who against the odds have discovered and sustained meaningful, love-filled relationships, moments of anomie and discontent can intrude what is by almost any reasonable definition a strong and supportive personal sanctuary. The personal, social and professional appetites of gay men and women are not significantly different from their heterosexual counterparts; the requirements for survival in personal, social and professional arenas are, however, dramatically dissimilar.

The struggle for a positive self image in the gay community has been keynoted by confrontations with the more outrageous critics of the homosexual life style. The technical losses in Eugene, Oregon, Wichita, Kansas, and Dade County, Florida, were in fact "victories." The referenda in various sectors of the country have induced dialogue and a sense of collegiality in the gay community. While the conversations in the streets of the gay community are exceptionally important, the self-encounters resulting from the debates in the political sphere are equally significant. The history of oppressed minorities and sub-cultures, including the contemporary campaign for gay rights, has been one of "circling back" -- returning to do battle with one's self, a struggle more devious and dangerous than any created by one's detractors. Just when the chilling citrus winds of the southeast appear to be muted, monitors of the moral majority prolong a discussion that will be judged by the centuries to be an intellectual tragedy.

The degree of introspection evidenced in the gay community is obviously not unique to the homosexual experience. Only a fool would suggest that the heterosexual world is devoid of sensitivity, insight and caring souls. Strong support is, however, available to suggest that the unique challenges of sustaining a balanced personality in an era of repression lead gay men and women, more frequently and more predictably, to the threshold of introspection. While the search for compatriots and supporters is high on the political agenda for any disadvantaged community, the most important cultural dialogue about alternative life styles

may well be the quality and direction of the intra-cultural dialogue in the gay community. The campaign for social and political franchises will have been for naught if members of the homosexual community do not draw positive and reinforcing conclusions about themselves. A humane and sensitive culture will be one in which not only the purveyors of bigotry and intemperance are harnessed by legal injunction but one in which all people, including gays, are intellectually and emotionally emancipated. The real challenge for gays will be to express themselves as well after liberation as before. The aspects of the homosexual experience which represent potential blocks to growth and productivity in an era of liberation are worthy of consideration by any profession that embraces the centrality of meaningful, sustained interpersonal communication.

I

Surviving as a gay in a heterosexual context often results in having a command of the art and science of self-disclosure. The personal decision to share information about one's most inner thoughts and desires can become all-consuming, occasionally over-powering, to most gays who live, work, and survive in an environment that is at least neutral and more often than not hostile. A recent survey reported that 70% of the individuals polled felt that homosexual acts were <u>always</u> wrong even if the individuals were in love.[1] A gay man or woman who might wish to share the knowledge of their life style with individuals in their environment are understandably intimidated by a repressive attitude which has shown little indication of abating in the last decade.

The literature on the importance of self-disclosure suggests that personal growth and development is in part a function of being able to appropriately invest one's <u>self</u> in interpersonal encounters. Phillips and Metzger have identified disclosure as a type of currency, "a very valuable prize to most people . . . . when someone confides in us, it makes us feel important because someone gave us so much power over his life. It is safer and more productive to contemplate weaknesses with a trusted friend, apparently, than to try to handle them alone."[2] In many instances the option of disclosure is effectively precluded for gays.

A "philosophy for disclosing" rests in the hope that the risk of shared intimacy will not be abused. The disclosing individual wishes to impress the potential friend with a high level of trust and simultaneously disarm one's critics

with candor. The necessity with which members of the homosexual community are called upon to disclose themselves is not matched, at least in quantity, by the requirements of a heterosexual life style. Unless a member of the straight world is closeting some sort of heinous behavior, the requirement of disclosure that can sear through the soul of a gay individual is essentially unknown in the heterosexual world. Information expressed by heterosexual lips which might be considered mundane and pedestrian would be grist for the rumor mill if expressed by a member of the gay community, e.g., one's life mate, celebration of anniversaries, social outlets, etc. In the best of circumstances, the healthy gay learns to share information in the most productive manner possible. Tempering tact with discretion, disclosing gays can skate clear of unsuspecting homophobic responses. Gay men and women may have to sanitize pronouns to protect their worst critics from their own intemperance. However, with good fortune, like any individual, gays can grow and be nurtured in a community in which friendship and companionship is measured in part by a healthy degree of mutual disclosure.

The alternative to interpersonal sharing, a "strategy of non-disclosure," can easily become the communication style forced upon gays by a non-supportive environment. Frivolous self-disclosure can be counterproductive; the absence of any intimate exchange can be a dangerous personal vice. Any individual, straight or gay, who feels compelled to live a lie may reach a point at which the "fiction" shared with one's associates becomes reality even to the author. Non-disclosure can be an instinctive response to a homophobic environment. However, a strategy of selective deceit can also erode one's ability to communicate with one's gay brothers and sisters. The "closeted" homosexual is the personification of the non-disclosing philosophy. Ultimately an individual, gay or straight, embraces an interpersonal style and negotiates the demands of disclosure. The most tragic of oppressed individuals are trapped against their intellectual and emotional instincts by the onus of the "pathogenic secret."

The concept of the pathogenic secret has been credited to the work of the Viennese physician Moritz Benedikt. *A pathogenic secret is personal information intentionally withheld which induces a state of physical and psychological dysfunction. The pathogenic secret is characterized by the withholding of relevant data when the demands of the social situation militate in favor of expression.* The gay man or woman who has an opportunity to identify their homosexuality in a non-threatening environment but are muted by a pattern of secrecy are typical of

the personality most susceptible to such dysfunctions. In many cases, the reason for keeping the "secret" is a real or imagined fear of rejection by the proximate or remote participants in the encounter, e.g., "If I tell him, my parents might find out." Regardless of the reasons for the lack of candor, the ultimate result is the progressive debilitation of a productive member of society. The virulent nature of homophobia in America renders some members of the gay community especially susceptible to the pathology of non-disclosure.

The correlation between effective interpersonal communication skills and the parameters of the healthy personality has been well established in the literature of communication studies and buttressed by research in the social and behavioral sciences. The classical work of Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson in Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry established the primacy of communication behavior in culturing a healthy personality. Ruesch argued that "people are mentally healthy only when their means of communication permit them to manage their surroundings successfully."[3] The give-and-take of interpersonal communication provides a litmus test of one's powers. A communicating individual is a healthy personality because ongoing effort to influence one's environment is a consummate act of optimism. An individual who is no longer willing to take the risk of "change" and "acceptance" has been side-tracked from the possibility of growth inherent in interpersonal contact. According to Ruesch, psychopathology is defined in terms of an interruption of the communication process. An individual who holds tenaciously to a pathogenic secret has reduced the arena of contact to an audience of one -- the self.

Information about one's self that is persistently repressed over a period of time can induce extreme stress thereby fostering the worst consequences of the pathogenic secret. Sidney Jourard has noted the energy and time used to conceal information distracts the individual from more rewarding and meaningful encounters. In some respects it might be easier for gay persons to disclose themselves to a fellow advocate or an avowed homophobe than to the less polarized personalities, the somewhat non-descript individuals representing most of the encounters encompassed in a life time. The vagaries of the super critic and the detractor are easy to chart. But, the non-public apparently uncommitted encounters represent a substantial threat. Because one simply doesn't know where the "average Joe" is coming from, the more conservative instinct not to risk rejection is just as psychologically damaging as a homophobe with bludgeon in hand. The gay who wishes to disclose but succumbs to "passing" in a fairly neutral environment may ultimately turn on one's

self and by confirming loss of self-confidence court the price of the pathogenic secret. Gays share the frustration recorded by Jourard when he wrote: "I am beginning to suspect that I can't even know my own soul except as I disclose it."[4]

Ellenberger[5] has identified a "no-exit" aspect to the pathogenic secret. To Ellenberger, the frustration of not being able to disclose substantial portions of one's self, such as sexuality, is exacerbated by the feeling, albeit untrue in most cases, that there is no chance that this vital information can ever be unlocked to another living being. The first step toward reducing the dissonance caused by non-disclosure, confession and revelation, is effectively precluded by the psychological mind set of the individual. The "no-exit" aspect of the non-discloser is the essence of personal pessimism about life in general. The philosophy of pessimism may be nothing more than a form of adolescent escapism, a world in which the probability of pain, loss, defeat and despair are effectively held at bay.

The trap of "no-exit" funnels gay men and women into furtive spates of hedonism which are ill-fated attempts to find self validation precluded by their incapacity to share themselves with the non-homosexual world. "An individual's sense of worth rests both upon the validation given by the self and that provided by society. The gay person is usually excluded from social validation except from within the gay community."[6] In exchange for a non-hostile territory, gay men and women often in desperation trade meaningful, although hurt-filled encounters, for the safer environments of hedonism for which the gay community at large is misunderstood. If the repressed hope for self-fulfillment has been effectively erased, the world of the narcissist and the hedonist may be all that remains for individuals who feel trapped in a world of unfair rules. Caged by an attitude of "no-exit", many gay men and women approach a feeling described by Moustakas: ". . . it seems that loneliness is sort of a cunning thing. It kind of knows 'torture' methods of its own. Sometimes it can begin to convince you that false truths are right, or it can let you see your friends having fun without you, and that can hurt."[7] The disaffected have reached an exceptionally dangerous stage of loneliness at "no-exit," a condition amplified by the pathogenic secret. The pathological non-discloser can quickly create a world of containment, a personal repertoire of roles and expectations which progressively escalate the individual into a non-productive world of fantasy. As the non-discloser is seduced further into the world of fantasy, the option to pursue a meaningful and productive life wanes.

II

Susceptibility to the pathogenic secret can be evaluated in the gay community as a response to a traditionally homophobic society. The term homophobe has yet to be enshrined in traditional dictionaries; the impact of homophobia in the culture is carried ultimately in everyone's emotional lexicon. Most individuals have little difficulty offering their gut feelings about homosexuals in their midst. Homophobes are individuals with an inordinate fear of men and women who profess, or are suspected of, sexual attraction to members of the same sex. Lehne describes homophobia as "an irrational, persistent, fear or dread of homosexuals."[8] Churchill used the term homeorotophobia to identify the "fear of erotic or sexual contact with members of the same sex."[9] Homophobes occasionally miss the distinction between illusion and reality. According to George Weinberg, "the fear . . . of being in close proximity to people they believe to be homosexual,"[10] can precipitate the rage of homophobia. The prevailing attitudes about sex, in general, have become so repressive in contemporary society that "attitudes toward male homosexuality have reached such phobic levels that any behavior which is suggestive of homosexuality is strictly condemned and avoided."[11]

The more crass manifestations of homophobia are not well documented in the general press. America's homophobia has been recently broadcast from an embarrassing international platform. Officers of the U.S. Immigration Service held a citizen of Mexico incommunicado for twenty-four hours. Officials at San Francisco International Airport discovered dresses in his luggage. Immigration authorities detained the man as a suspected homosexual but released him after it was discovered that he was a dress designer. The woman's ensemble that had precipitated the detention was intended for a hostess in the Bay area.[12]

The actions of the U.S. Immigration authority (INS) escalated to such outrageous proportions that U.S. Senator Alan Cranston (D-California) announced his intention to introduce legislation to eliminate the anti-homosexual provision of the federal immigration code. Cranston feels that the restrictive immigration code is "intellectually, morally and medically unsound" and concedes that efforts to remove the discrimination will be difficult because of a "lot of medieval thinking on this subject in the Congress."[13] The discrimination by homophobic American officials was the subject of ridicule by a major media caper conducted by Dutch gay activists at Amsterdam's Schipol Airport. "The Homo Squad" and the "Dyke Section," Dutch gays masquerading as immigration officials, approached

unsuspecting American tourists and asked them: "Are you Homosexual?" The media stunt was reported to have had a major impact on American tourists subjected to reverse discrimination.[14]

When members of the gay community attempt to participate in the symbolic charitable and social aspects of the community, the response of the homophobic mentality is almost comical. In Tucson, the U.S. Marine Corps refused to accept donations of toys and cash for their "Toys for Tots" program because the contributions originated through the local gay community. The holiday spirit was sorely absent as Houston police officers arrested a gay activist for operating a public address system without a permit on a vacant lot in the city's Montrose section. A Houston gay present at the yule-tide program declared: "I have never been to a choir concert that was raided. With all the major crime in Houston, to put 10 or 12 officers out on a Christmas carol program is a pretty bad scene."[15]

Homophobia unfortunately has not been limited to silly and furtive raids on holiday parties. The most vulgar of the "gay-haters" have paved the streets of the nation with the blood and tears of gay men and women. Attacks against persons and property have come from the community at large as well as from members of the law enforcement community. In Denver, harassment from police has been so bold that a program entitled "Datacall," a program supported by the National Gay Task Force, has been established to document threats to gays. One of the more recent acts of intimidation in Denver involved three men who were ordered into a police car where their heads were shaved with battery powered clippers. Reportedly, the police released the three men with the warning: "Go back and tell the rest of the faggots that this is just a warning." [16]

The physical threats from homophobes are matched by the psychological threat represented by active and violent intolerance. Unspoken and implied threats of violence can be equally damaging. The non-vocal homophobe is a very special kind of coward. The homophobic "silent majority" in many instances pass under the guise of disinterest or mock tolerance. Unwilling to engage in public dialogue about their fears, the muted homophobes do their greatest damage in an indirect and deceitful manner. Rumor, innuendo and gossip, the main-stay of the homophobe's lexicon, have rarely been considered strategies in the arsenal of sensitive and humane individuals.

Homophobia is also evident in the choice of profession which the public in

general feels appropriate for individuals of a homosexual life style. For most individuals, the choice of a profession is a thoughtful decision which weds the instincts and talents of an individual to the best suited profession, a marriage of self and calling that will foster security as well as interpersonal growth and development. The homophobic mind set, in many cases, categorically denies some professions to individuals because of their sexual preference. A Gallup poll reported in the San Francisco Chronicle indicated that many people are willing to restrict the range of professional options for gays. Sixty-five percent felt that it was inappropriate for a gay to be an elementary school teacher; fifty-four percent felt that it was improper for a gay man or woman to be a member of the clergy. Forty-four percent preferred that medical doctors not be homosexual and thirty-eight percent would exclude gays from the armed forces.[17]

The chronology of homophobic discrimination in America is a record of a social disease that has strongly influenced gays' view of themselves and their faith in the future. The Weinberg-Collins research published in the mid 1970's documented the extent of psychological differences evident in the attitudes of homosexuals as compared to general samples of the population. Thirty-four per cent of the homosexual research sample felt that "no one cares what happens to you" compared with a 23% response from the general population. Forty-eight per cent of the gay population viewed human nature as basically "uncooperative"; only twenty-seven percent of the heterosexuals studied considered their environment to be unhelpful. And, when asked if most people could be trusted, fifty-three percent of the gay group answered "No" contrasting with a twenty-three percent negative response from the straight environment.[18] It is quite evident from the Weinberg-Collins survey that one's sexual orientation, especially if recognized as deviant for the community norm, can impact on self concept, one's feelings about the viability of meaningful interpersonal communication, and the attitude with which one relates to others in general. Gays have a greater chance of isolating themselves because of suspicion, in many cases with good reason, with which they approach their immediate environments. A legacy of personal oppression can easily manifest itself in an increased susceptibility to the pathogenic secret.

A comprehensive profile of homophobic individuals is somewhat elusive. Except for the inordinate fear of homosexuality, homophobes are not restricted to any particular professional, social, religious, racial, economic or ethnic background. Homophobes are fairly consistent in their basic mind set. Homophobes

usually do not limit their intemperance to the gay community; the mentality which "hates" gays finds little difficulty hating Blacks, Jews, Chicanos, Iranians, etc. Efforts to chart the demographics of homophobia have been haphazard. Levitt and Klassen concluded that homophobes are more likely to be "rural, white and male."[19] Occasionally, the research conclusions are contradictory. Louis Crew's analysis of homophobia in the academic world concluded that a female chairperson was much more likely to be hostile to a gay person than a non-female administrator.[20]

III

The very institutions that gays might turn to to temper the pains of discrimination are the most obvious bastions of homophobia -- the church, the family and one's peers. Organized religion, the family unit and educational institutions have demonstrated an impressive degree of insensitivity toward homosexuality. Criticism of non-monolithic social institutions obviously runs the risk of over-generalization; the exceptions to general repressive traditions are, however, more the exception than the standard.

Gay men and women are products of a society which has an exceptional regard, if not fear, of religious dogma. Colonial America was founded in the name of freedom of religion. But, exclusion of gays from religious perogatives has been as consistent as the manner in which the culture has been manacled by a spirit of puritanism. Self proclaimed theologians have consistently translated select passages of scripture to the advantage of their world-view. The amount of guilt which organized religion has been able to heap on the gay community is astronomical. It is evident that one of the greatest challenges gay men and women encounter involves mitigating the sense of loss, guilt, failure, disappointment and despair which results from rejecting the homophobia of the church. Traditional organized religion in America has preached compassion but has rarely practiced charity. Contemporary religious practices represent a major psychological threat to the gay community. "Regular church attendance is correlated with negative attitudes toward homosexual relations among Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans . . . . but active church attendance for Baptists and Episcopalians . . . has been correlated with less prejudice."[21]

In one Midwestern seminary, a bishop has been able to effectively thwart the ordination of a man who had openly proclaimed his homosexuality. The very

institution that purports to offer consolation, warmth and understanding has proven itself to be heartless and insensitive. While the recent addition of gay parishes, fellowships and religious caucuses are a positive contribution to the homosexual community, gays are still inclined to be influenced by feelings of existential guilt resulting from their recognition of being excluded from the church's community.

Most homosexuals would be willing to leave their sexuality at the doorstep of the cathedral; the critics of homosexuality are not. Occasionally there is hope for a renaissance of humanity in the church in America, e.g., the more conservative Disciples of Christ voted to allow regional bodies of their national bodies to ordain homosexual ministers. The more predictable reaction of Religion on the Right in America is illustrated by the Baptist minister in Watertown, New York, who put a sign in front of his church: "God Says Death to Homos." The intemperate minister of the Word believes that gays should be exterminated by the government.[22]

The church would be an ideal interlocutor between the homophobic community and the homosexual who feels psychologically under siege. As "confessor" and "shepherd", the voices of the church should be in a unique position to counsel tolerance and pilot gays away from self destructive paths of self-criticism and self-indulgence. "Men do experience existential guilt. Everyone carries the burden of failed potentiality -- the pursuit of a career, in interpersonal relationships, even in play and creative enjoyment. But few men discuss failed potentialities."[23] The church has sadly missed its function as listener in guiding bigotry toward the light and gays away from the paths of the pathogenic secret.

A life force equal to, if not more powerful than, the church is the primary family unit. The fear of disclosing their homosexuality to their parents and guardians have driven gays to lives of extreme isolation, artificial marital relationships and tragically to suicide. The possibility of appearing to be a "failure" in front of the folks can drive individuals into the depths of the pathogenic secret. The importance of the family in the scheme of human needs has been well established in the literature of sociology and psychology. Maslow's hierarchy of prepotent needs attests to the importance of a sense of belonging. Only the primary requirements for food and water and shelter transcend the importance of attachment to a "family" unit. The validation of the self and personal fulfillment are dynamos of behavior which develop after the establishing of a sense of belonging. Gay men and women who fear ultimate rejection by their parents

also forgo the opportunity to reach a state of self-actualization.

The sense of guilt and shame which is induced by religion is duplicated by one's relationship to the primary family unit. The wrath of disappointed parents is not as psychologically damaging ultimately as the feeling that one has failed to live up to their expectations of you, i.e., to be an average, normal individual. Parents instinctively monitor their own actions for proof of the cause for their child's homosexuality. And, their feeling of remorse for having failed fuels a hatred, and hostility, toward their children. By clogging the channels of communication at first encounter, parents render themselves impotent in loving, counseling and guiding their son or daughter through the treacherous waters of a very misunderstood life style. Rather than sharing their fears, hopes and desires with mom and dad, the homosexual son or daughter is isolated and catapulted toward the stance of the pathogenic secret.

A young nineteen year old man told his parents of his intention to live life openly as a homosexual. The disclosure was particularly gutsy because the young man had in fact never experienced a physical relationship with another man. The response of the parents was immediate and reactionary. The young man was ordered from the home for his willingness to share himself with his parents. In a matter of minutes, the young gay's life was converted from one centered around his primary home to one of self-containment and potential isolation. The institution that should be the antithesis of the pathogenic secret, in this case, provided a vivid rationale why so few gays come forward willingly.

The university is another social institution which would be expected to represent an environment contrary to the pathogenic secret. In its most classical sense, the center of learning provides a free and open forum in which to test attitudes, ideas and beliefs without fear of recrimination. The university, for example, as described in Louie Crew's <u>The Gay Academic</u> has faltered as badly as the church and family in providing a forum for the free and unfettered discussion of alternative life styles. The university has been an institution which has meekly abided discussion of gay liberation but has carefully avoided supporting meaningful research and analysis.

The university has been inaccurately considered to be the center of liberal thought quite contrary to the evidence. Student attitudes, including views regarding homosexuality, have taken a decided turn toward conservatism during the

last decade. A survey published by the American Council on Education entitled "The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall, 1979" described the incursion of conservative thought. The report published in conjunction with U.C.L.A. noted that 39% of the women and 56% of the men felt that "homosexual relations should be prohibited."[24] "Whether the recent resurgence of conservatism in North America, decline in college attendance, and more fundamentalist religion will signal a renewal of homophobia in the population is difficult to determine. Certainly organized opposition to homosexuals has become more vocal in the late 1970's."[25]

The voices of conservatism in the church, home and at the university have been able to prevail and flourish because advocates of the gay life style have been reluctant to express an alternative view. Gays, young and old and in every profession, suffer from a lack of attractive role models. The oppressed gays will be able to leave their closets when they recognize a positive alternative to their life of stress mired in the world of pathogenic secrets. The liberating aspect of attractive gay role models was poignantly identified in a letter from a young man to Dave Kopay, the former professional football player who confirmed his homosexuality in December of 1975. The young man wrote:

> "You did more for me in that one 45-minute television interview than I've been able to do in almost a year of soul-searching and selective conversation. I'm a 19 year old guy with a semi-steady girl, an exclusively heterosexual past and -- until recently -- a presumably heterosexual future. Recently a guy I've known at school for about a year and a half has begun making rather blunt overtures -- sexually -- in my direction. Shit. All these big words. He's been putting 'the move' on me. And I've been casually sidestepping them. Which is fine except I'm not at all sure I want to sidestep them. So it's been really bugging me. I've talked it over with him, tried to explain to him, but I don't know how or what to say to my girl, my one real love right now. Last night, we had our closest yet to a discussion of it -- and although it never came out, I think she now realizes what the problem is. I got home and turned on the TV feeling really down and man -- THERE YOU WERE! I just sat there and didn't move for an hour. I hung on your every word. You seem so at peace with yourself and able to articulate things I've been trying to tell myself and others for months now. Man you almost made me cry and that isn't too usual for me. I called the guy today and I'm gonna see him for a long talk next weekend. I need that much time to prepare myself because I guess it'll be a turning point in my life. So something's gonna happen for the first time in quite a while -- although I'm nervous as hell -- I feel good about myself, my sexuality. It's me and I have no reason or right to deny it. I love you and I thank you. No shit."[25]

The pathogenic secret and its capacity to destroy is irrelevant to the young man who wrote Kopay. But, the luck and enlightenment reflected in the young man's letter is unique. The opportunities to meet and evaluate one's self in reference to positive role models is exceptionally limited.

IV

The ascendancy of the homophobic mentality can be seen as the "psychopathology of the average." When one scratches beneath the crass and rude behavior of the "gay-hater," one can usually encounter a rather frightened and pathetic kind of norm. Anti-gay attitudes can be seen as an extension of the age old battle of the sexes. The advancement of gay rights is incorrectly seen as an assault on male privilege. Barely holding his own against the efforts of the Women's humanist movements, the average heterosexual male trapped by traditional male roles is infuriated by the gay man's social iconoclasm.

Homophobic individuals have been trapped by the definition and norms placed upon them by their own environment. The traditional mold of the family unit has little latitude for the concept of a homosexual family. Men and women who are parents and now lead exclusively homosexual lives are viewed as pariahs who deceived the sanctity of the family and knowingly superimposed their preference, even though repressed, on an unsuspecting mate. The gender-bound expectations promulgated by the society influence a man or woman's ability to respond to representatives of life styles who reject the narrow definition. Traditional society has encouraged men to repress their emotions and has thereby destroyed a constructive channel of expression. If a gay man gets in touch with his emotions and demonstrates them openly, the interdiction of society's norm about restrained sensitivity for men is as threatening as the thought of sleeping with another man. The instinct for the individual bound by such narrow distinction is to "hate" those who destroy the security of the label. But, the greatest fear of contact with gay men and women may be to discover that labels are only averages. Through contact with one's self and individuals of the gay community, heterosexual associate and homophobe alike will reinforce Masters and Johnson's scale of sexuality which suggests that reality is most likely somewhere between "one" and "six."

F O O T N O T E S

[1]Connie DeBoer, "The Polls: Attitudes Toward Homosexuality", The Public Opinion Quarterly 42:2 (Summer 1978), p. 276.

[2]Gerald M. Phillips and Nancy J. Metzger, Intimate Communication (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976), p. 376.

[3]Jurgen Reusch and Gregory Bateson, Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 87.

[4]Sidney Jourard, "Self Disclosure: The Scientist's Portal to Man's Soul", in Jean M. Civikly, ed., Messages: A Reader in Human Communication (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 163.

[5]See H.R. Ellenberger, "The Pathogenic Secret and Its Therapeutics", Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences, 2 (1966), pp. 29-42.

[6]Carmen deMonteflores and Stephen J. Schultz, "Coming Out: Similarities and Differences for Lesbians and Gay Men", Journal of Social Issues 34:3 (1978), p. 65.

[7]Clark E. Moustakas, Loneliness (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Publishing, Inc., 1961), p. 41.

[8]See G.K. Lehne, "Homophobia Among Men", in D. David and R. Brannon, eds., The Forty-Nine Percent Majority (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1976).

[9]See W. Churchill, Homosexual Behavior Among Males (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1967).

[10]See George Weinberg, Society and the Healthy Homosexual (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972).

[11]Stephen F. Morin and Ellen M. Garfinkle, "Male Homophobia", Journal of Social Issues 34:1 (November 1, 1978), p. 30.

[12]The Advocate, #286, February 2, 1980, p. 7.

[13]The Advocate, #287, March 6, 1980, p. 10.

[14]The Advocate, #287, March 6, 1980, p. 10.

[15]The Advocate, #284, January 10, 1980, p. 10.

[16]The Advocate, #283, December 27, 1979, p. 7.

[17]A.P. MacDonald, Jr. and Richard G. Games, "Some Characteristics of Those Who Hold Positive and Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuals", Journal of Homosexuality (1974), p. 34.

[18]Martin S. Weinberg and Colin J. Williams, Male Homosexuals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 152.

[19]E. Levitt and A. Klassen, "Public Attitudes Toward Homosexuality", Journal of Homosexuality 1 (1974), pp. 29-43.

[20]Louie Crew, ed., The Gay Academic (Palm Springs, California: ETC Publications, 1978).

[21]Joseph Harry and William B. DeVall, The Social Organization of Gay Males (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), p. 175.

[22]Advocate, #282, December 13, 1979, p. 11.

[23]Gerard Egan, Encounter: Group Processes for Interpersonal Growth (Belmont, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1970), p. 217.

[24]See "The American Freshmen; National Norms for Fall, 1979", Published by the American Council on Education and the University of California at Los Angeles.

[25]David Kopay and Perry Deane Young, The David Kopay Story (New York: Arbor House, 1977), pp. 197-8.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

The Advocate, December 13, 1979, p. 11.

The Advocate, December 27, 1979, p. 7.

The Advocate, January 10, 1980, p. 10.

The Advocate, February 21, 1980, p. 7.

The Advocate, March 6, 1970, p. 10.

"The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall, 1979", The American Council on Education & University of California at Los Angeles, February 1980.

Churchill, W. Homosexual Behavior Among Males. New York Hawthorne, 1967.

Crew, Louie, ed. The Gay Academic. Palm Springs, California, ETC Publications, 1978.

deBoer, Connie, "The Polls: Attitudes Toward Homosexuality", The Public Opinion Quarterly, 42:2 (Summer 1978), p. 276.

deMonteflores, Carmen and Schultz, Stephen J., "Coming Out: Similarities and Differences for Lesbians and Gay Men", Journal of Social Issues 34:3 (1978), p. 65.

Egan, Gerard. Encounter: Group Process for Interpersonal Growth. Belmont, California. 1970.

Ellenberger, H.R., "The Pathogenic Secret and Its Therapeutics", Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences 2 (1966) pp. 29-42.

Harry, Joseph and DeVall, William B. The Social Organization of Gay Males. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978.

Jourard, Sidney. "Self Disclosure: The Scientist's Portal to Man's Soul", in Civikly, Jean, ed., Messages: A Reader in Human Communication. New York: Random House, 1977).

Kopay, David and Young, Perry Deane. The David Kopay Story. New York: Arbor House, 1977.

Lehne, G.G., "Homophobia Among Men", in David, D. & Brannon, R., eds., The Forty Nine Percent Majority. New York: Addison-Wesley, 1976.

Levitt, E. and Klassen, A., "Public Attitudes Toward Homosexuality", Journal of Homosexuality 1:1 (1974), pp. 29-43.

MacDonald, A.P. and Games, Richard G., "Some Characteristics of Those Who Hold Positive and Negative Attitudes Toward Homosexuals", Journal of Homosexuality, 1:1 (1974), p. 34.

Morin, Stephen F. and Garfinkle, Ellen M., "Male Homophobia", Journal of Social Issues 34:1 (November 1, 1978), p. 30.

Moustakas, Clark E. Loneliness. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Publishing, Inc., 1961.

Phillips, Gerald M. and Metzger, Nancy J. Intimate Communication. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976.

Ruesch, Jurgen and Bateson, Gregory. Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968.

Weinberg, George. Society and the Healthy Homosexual. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972.

Williams, Colin J. and Weinberg, Martin S. Male Homosexuals. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.